May flowers bring rain showers?: NARA's budget crunch, the Gaza war, ICJ ruling, the brutal Rafah assault, LGBTQ+ people, animation, and beyond

Burkely Hermann

May 18, 2024

In my first newsletter in a while, I highlight articles on archives, libraries, genealogy, history, vegetarianism, climate change, Gaza, and other topics, such as my recent pop culture media reviews.

I wasn't expecting a scene like this in *Kin-iro Mosaic* (also known as *Kinmoza)*, but I had to laugh when I watched this scene. Karen (shown above) responds to her teacher who declares she will destroy the film so as get rid an embarrassing photo (which would reportedly ruin her "image"). Karen tells her since it is a digital camera there's no film. However, she could just destroy the SD card or camera itself.

Hello everyone! I know its been a while since I wrote my last newsletter, but I've been relatively busy since then. I'd like to start by mentioning my reviews of the following series: *Stardust Telepath (*ended*)*, *Spy x Family* (Season 2), *Soaring Sky! Pretty Cure (*ended*)*, *Hazbin Hotel* (Season 1),

The Vexations of a Shut-In Vampire Princess (I have very mixed feelings about this series), *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur* (Season 2 Part 1), *Hailey's On It! (*ongoing*)*, and *Metallic Rouge* (ended). I'd also like to note my posts in my WordPress blog, *Pop Culture Library Review,* about: fictional librarians of color, love in the fictional library, revisiting the fictional library shusher stereotype, examining unorthodox libraries in fiction, fictional libraries and the importance of studying, the duty of the librarian (and destruction and knowledge) within the Witches Crest library in the anime adaptation of *Somali and the Forest Spirit* (its one of my favorite series!), recently added titles for January, February, March, and April (*now* including paragraphs summarizing new episodes/issues of what I'm reading/watching), and other topics (see here and here), along with name changes and romance in the public library in *Alter Ego*, remembering the significant depiction of libraries in *Bibliophile Princess*, and forbidden library knowledge in *Sleepy Princess in the Demon Castle*.

Otherwise, I've written about many topics,, on my *Wading Through the Cultural Stacks* blog, related to archives and archivy themes in pop culture, including: bureaucracy and paperwork in *Hilda*, record preservation and destruction in *Cleopatra in Space*; paper records, memory, obsolescence, memory, and emotional imprint of paper records in *Violet Evergarden* (and the impact of paper records in the same series); records manipulation, oppressive systems, and memory in reality and fiction; re-assessing the Savior Institute in *Cleopatra in Space*, conservation and preservation in *Steven Universe Future*, examining Lyssa Votz as a possible "archivist" in a Star Wars novel, and sensitive documents and information leaks, vinyl record preservation as related to *Words Bubble Up Like Soda Pop*, mass document shredding and reality of record destruction, and Indigenous repatriation and archival ethics, among others. Upcoming topics include: preservation of VHS tapes and videotapes, Betamax, and horror of nuclear holocaust and an archival facade in *Justice League*.

In terms of archives, there is a lot to write about. The Max streaming service did yet another content purge, removing over 70 films at the end of March, including: *Citizen Kane* (1941), *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), *Coraline* (2009) [I have a physical copy of this], *Fast Food Nation* (2006), *Harold & Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay* (2008), *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* (1993) [I have a physical copy of this], and *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory* (1971) [I have a physical copy of this]. This is bad for users and *again* shows that streaming services *cannot be trusted* to retain content. Otherwise, my work colleagues wrote about the National Archives panel which focused on government access and A.I., Vladimir Putin's first election in Russia in March 2000, and the threat of mission failure based on the pathetic (and inadequate) budget request for fiscal year 2025, a $9.2 million

decrease while the agency's **"**responsibilities are increasing, its facilities and technologies are aging, and requesters are waiting over a decade for responses to their declassification requests." Lauren Harper, in her last post for NSA before moving onto her new job, said that this funding reduction was likely dictated by the Office of Management and Budget even though giving the agency less money per year "portends a deepening crisis" when it comes to a FOIA backlog at the Bush II and Obama presidential libraries, outdated systems for preserving and accepting presidential records, dwindling archival storage capability, other backlogs, and additional issues.

Harper points out that without a significant increase in funding, "NARA will not be able to meet its core mission to preserve and provide equitable public access to government records," hampering the ability to respond to inquiries from Congress and complicating work with presidential administrations "to safeguard the highest-level U.S. government records." The agency will also struggle to "meet requests from veterans, scholars, genealogists and the general public for access to records," with wait times for declassification requests taking "years to process…further weakening government accountability and endangering access to our nation's history." It is a dire situation. I wish her the best of luck at her new job as a management/evaluation specialist for the Department of Commerce, working to improve their Freedom of Information program. Apart from this is a review of archivy themes in *Winner*, the nonfiction thriller by Kerry Howley "about Reality Winner, the most recent millennial charged under the Espionage Act." It reminds me of Tina Satter's film *Reality*, based on the original record, even skipping scenes when lines were redacted!

When it comes to libraries, there's a lot to say. On January 21st of this year, the Council of the American Library Association (ALA), which calls itself the "oldest and largest library association in the world," voted overwhelmingly, by a vote of 28-114-6 *against* an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. As I promised on social media, I am writing about this here. In my last newsletter, I wrote that the ALA president, Emily Drabinski, has not "posted anything about the Gaza Strip despite destruction of libraries and archives in Israel's brutal bombing campaign." That remains true today. This shameless decision by the ALA Council indicates that the professional organization, as I wrote back in March 2022, "care[s] more about White people than people of color," since it undoubtedly has a White majority. In that newsletter, I noted that, back in 2009, the ALA released a "both sides are bad" statement on Israeli war in Gaza, which was said to be "amended to the point of uselessness" by the ALA's Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT). According to the Resolutions Archive, put together by the ALA's SRRT, resolutions in support of Palestinian rights activists proposed by SRRT in

2019 and 2020 were “rejected by the ALA Council, as was a 2021 statement on damage and destruction of schools and cultural institutions in Gaza and damage to Israeli schools,” while a 2002 statement on the “destruction of Palestinian libraries, archives, and other cultural resources was watered down.”

One of the branches of the Los Angeles Public Library shown in an episode of Elizabeth Ito’s *City of Ghosts*. This series was sadly only seen as a curiosity by Netflix execs, who didn’t care to renew it, even though it would have made an interesting ongoing series.

I’ve also written, back in August 2021, that the ALA, and “especially its council, has taken very conservative and reactionary positions, starting in the mid-1980s, but the amount of rejections after 2000 are higher than in any other period.” In another newsletter, in March 2022, I noted that “while the SRRT had more success in passing progressive resolutions in the earlier years, as time went on, fewer resolutions proposed were accepted by the council.” I stand by what I said at the time. This decision by the ALA, as I described in the previous paragraph, shows the weakness of the organization’s leadership and it *does not* encourage me to rejoin. Whether Drabinski is to blame for this resolution’s failure, I’m not sure, but it could indicate her limited influence within the organization if she happens to favor the ceasefire. To date, she has never tweeted about Palestine, Gaza, or Israel, which is telling in more ways than one. She seems to be more focused on fighting book bans than any other issue.

In other library news, there is a showdown in the Idaho State House about libraries, Drabinski talking about weaponization of libraries (relates to what I said earlier), and the ALA expressing alarm at proposed cuts to IMLS funding. Others noted topics such as: how prisons in Texas regulate women's knowledge behind bars (this is nothing new as Kate Moore's *The Women They Could Not Silence* talked about this in the asylum/prison in Jacksonville, Illinois), Google Books beginning to index AI-generated garbage books (BOO!), and a Black-owned children's bookstore in Raleigh moving after threats, including to the owner's children.

Moving onto other topics, in late January, Bill Blum wrote about the International Court of Justice (ICJ)'s legally binding order, in the case of *South Africa v. Israel*, telling Israel to abide by six provisional measures in the war in Gaza, including requiring "Israel to prevent and punish individuals who make public statements inciting genocide; preserve evidence related to allegations of genocide; improve the provision of humanitarian aid to the embattled enclave." However, he claims that because the ICJ did not grant one of South Africa's key demands (that Israel stop its brutal bombing campaign in Gaza) it means that that case brought by South African lawyers is a "failure." He rightly describes the ICJ as a Western institution and says that there is "an overall bias against developing nations." He follows this up by laughably declaring that South Africa engaged in an "egregious" failure, absurdly saying that South Africa's legal team overcharged Israel by focusing on "broad context" (i.e. Israel's oppression of Palestinians since 1948), feeding into Israel's "counter-narrative" while they "failed" by not acknowledging "Israel's right to self-defense," and allowed themselves to be out-lawyered by Israeli lawyers. He also said because South Africa failed to have Palestine as a party to the case, their "absence meant that any cease-fire order would be unilateral and apply only to Israel," a limitation that the court did not accept.

Blum ends his article by saying that Israel needs to file a "progress report with the ICJ in late February" (Israel did so but the report has *not* been released to the public) and the case will enter a long phase following the report, with years before a full trial is held, noting that the International Criminal Court (ICC) has opened an investigation into war crimes committed in the region by Hamas and Israel. He says that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Yahya Sinwar of Hamas may face arrest warrants in the future. One of my major issues with the article is that Blum accepts the Israeli narrative of the war: that they are fighting Hamas. Clearly, they are trying to wipe out Palestinians, not just attack Hamas fighters. Furthermore, he takes a both-sides-are-bad stance (saying there is lawlessness and war-mongering on both sides and that they are both dedicated to fighting until the "bitter, bloody

end"), seems to deny that Israel has been oppressing Palestinians since 1948, and doesn't recognize the irony in saying that the ICJ is biased toward developing countries. He uncritically says the ICC (which is similarly biased toward Western countries) issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin in March 2023.

It remains to be seen whether the ICC will issue similar warrants for Western officials, but most likely they will not. I would argue that South Africa did not have to argue that Israel has a right to self-defense because Israel would already have made that argument themselves. Instead, as I said in my last newsletter, "the ICJ clearly could have done more, but this ruling is a victory for South Africa and Palestinians." After choosing to not implement more measures on February 16, the court ordered *more* emergency measures in late March requested by South Africa, despite the laughable objection from Israel, stating that Palestinians in Gaza "are no longer facing only a risk of famine (…) but that famine is setting in" and ordering, by wide margins, Israel to ensure humanitarian assistance and basic services in Gaza by "increasing the capacity and number of land crossing points and maintaining them open for as long as necessary," ensuring that Israeli military does not violate rights of Palestinians under the Genocide Convention, and other measures.

South Africa has made other requests (on March 10), including asking the court to order that Israel withdraw from Gaza, provide free access to Gaza by U.N. officials, journalists, and humanitarian organizations, and provisional measures (on May 10) to protect those in Rafah but the court has not yet ruled on those requests, unfortunately, but *soon* will, with public hearings on these requests on May 16th and May 17th. Others said that the ruling, despite its problems, still delivered "a devastating blow to the foundational myth of Israel," and has given legal license to use the word genocide to describe "what Israel is doing in Gaza." It is not enough, as commentator Chris Hedges put it, given the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe. This remains the case despite Iran's retaliatory military strike on Israel in response to Israel's military attack on the Iranian consulate in Damascus. In terms of the ongoing conflict in Gaza, there are additional stories about the use of A.I. with little human oversight by the Israeli military which has murdered tens of thousands of Palestinians, the history of American Jewish dissent against Zionism, elected officials in Prince George's County, Maryland calling for a ceasefire, and people protesting Jamie Raskin with pro-Palestine chants.

LGBTQ+ protesters called out Human Rights Campaign (HRC)'s ties to a weapons manufacturer (Northrop Grumman) and demanding the HRC call for a ceasefire in Gaza, a new media alliance named Media Against Apartheid & Displacement (MAAD) has been formed to curate works

against colonial violence. Others have examined Zionist colonialism through an abolitionist lens, argued there is no endgame in Gaza, noted the "long war" in Gaza, and have posed that liberal Zionism is "good" (it isn't). More directly, and strongly, the Lemkin Institute released a statement, on January 31, noting the shift between potential complicity and direct involvement in crime of genocide by several countries, saying in part:

> The Lemkin Ins[t]itute for Genocide Prevention is deeply concerned by the decision of a coalition of several nations – the United States and Germany, in concert with Australia, Austria, Canada, Estonia, Finland, France, Iceland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Romania, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom – to suspend funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). This is a serious escalation of the crisis in Gaza and follows the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) first ruling in Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel), which many hoped would slow the genocide. Further, it represents a shift by several countries from potential complicity in genocide **to direct involvement in engineered famine**. It is an attack on what remains of personal security, liberty, health, and dignity in Palestine…If no reversal is forthcoming, we condemn the decision to defund UNRWA, and in doing so, we join a growing consensus of practitioners of international law and scholars of genocide in pointing out that this action is tantamount to increased participation in the on-going genocide of Palestinians in Gaza and constitutes both a violation of the ICJ's recent ruling and of the participating nations' responsibilities under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide ('the Genocide Convention'). We further warn that withdrawing funding for UNRWA functions as a fulcrum by which genocidal acts against Palestinians will spread from Gaza to other critical, endangered zones for Palestinian life. During a period of famine, to implement either permanent cancellation or a pause of funding potentially puts states that have previously committed funds in violation of the Genocide Convention.

Since then, Canada, Sweden and the European Union have resumed funding, but the U.S., along with Germany, Japan, France, Switzerland, U.K., Netherlands, Australia, Iceland, Romania, and Estonia, have not resumed funding. This is rich considering that, as a recent BBC article revealed, using SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) data, three countries supply the majority of weapons to Israel: U.S. (65.6%), Germany (29.7%), and Italy (4.7%). The SIPRI press

release noted the release of recent data reveals "the USA accounted for 69 per cent and Germany for 30 per cent of arms imports by Israel." This release further noted that between 2014-2018 and 2019-2023, "the United States increased its arms exports by 17 per cent…while Russia's arms exports halved"! The database, which can be searched for any years here, shows that since Biden has been office, the U.S. has provided Israel with helicopters, guided bombs, submarines, and other weapons (not including the secret weapons):

Recipient	Supplier	Designation	Description	Weapon Category	Sub-Weapon Category	Order Year	Number Ordered	Delivery Years
Israel	United States	CH-53K	transport helicopter	Aircraft		2021	12	0
Israel	United States	F-15 Advanced	FGA aircraft	Aircraft		2023 ?	25 ?	0
Israel	United States	KC-46A -	tanker/transport aircraft	Aircraft		2021	4	0
Israel	United States	F-35A	FGA aircraft	Aircraft		2023 ?	25	0
Israel	Germany	Dakar	submarine	Ships		2022	3	0
Israel	United States	JDAM	guided bomb	Missiles		2021 ?	1800 ?	2023
Israel	United States	aircraft engine 6001-8000	aircraft engine	Engines		2021	4 ?	0
Israel	United States	GBU-39	guided glide bomb	Missiles		2021 ?	1000 ?	2023
Israel	United States	Tamir MI	SAM	Missiles		2023	300 ?	2023
Israel	United States	JDAM	guided bomb	Missiles		2023	1200 ?	2023
Israel	United States	David	APV	Armoured vehicles		2022 ?		0
Israel	United States	Iron Dome	SAM system	Other		2023	2	2023
Israel	United States	AGM-114 Hellfire-2	anti-tank missile/ASM	Missiles		2023	2000	2023
Israel	United States	L-ATV	APV	Armoured vehicles		2023	100 ?	0
Israel	United States	AH-64A Apache	combat helicopter	Aircraft		2023 ?	12 ?	0

The brutal bombing of Rafah by Israel to "fight Hamas" (actually part of Israel's genocide aimed at wiping out Palestinians) is reprehensible and should be condemned. South Africa opposed Israeli military operations in Rafah, arguing that the international community "cannot ignore the grave violations of international law and the UN Charter by the State of Israel." They added that there *must* "be an immediate ceasefire and negotiations to this end must continue. Hamas must release all hostages. Israel must release all political prisoners and urgent full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access must be provided for aid to reach the people of Gaza." This criticism was joined by the governments of Brazil, Mexico, Malaysia, and many others. Previously, the governments of China, Egypt, Jordan, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Turkey, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Arab League, Gulf Cooperation Council, and the European Union called on no Israeli military assault on Rafah (and more generally the Israeli military invasion into Gaza), in statements with varying degrees of criticism.

All the while, the governments of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, and U.S. warned against a full-scale invasion. Biden warned he would withhold certain weapons, although such a threat comes far too late to have any meaningful impact, as he is trying to win over those sympathetic to

present anti-Zionist protests (and protesters themselves), while also remaining "ironclad" in support for Israel. He can't have it both ways. It will likely hurt him in November. In one of the more telling statements, the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg, Xavier Bettel, said in February, that Israel may lose "the last support they have in the world" if they went forward with an attack on Rafah. One of the only bastions of support for Israel is the right-wing government in Argentina. This came to pass in a recent U.N. General Assembly vote (on U.N. General Assembly Resolution ES-10/23), which gave new "rights and privileges" to Palestine and called upon on the U.N. Security Council to reconsider Palestine's request to become a U.N. member state. 143 countries voted for the resolution, with 25 abstaining, and only *nine* countries voted against it: the U.S., Israel, Argentina, Czechia, Hungary, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, and Papua New Guinea. As *AP* described it, this "demonstrated growing support for the Palestinians" even though the resolution only gives Palestine "the rights to speak on all issues not just those related to the Palestinians and Middle East, to propose agenda items and reply in debates, and to serve on the assembly's main committees" and to "participate in U.N. and international conferences convened by the United Nations, but without the right to vote," sadly.

With that, I'm moving onto a totally different subject: genealogy. I've been relatively active on *Packed with Packards!*, with posts such as those about Josephine Packard the laundress, the interconnected stories of Hazel and Josephine (and themes of divorce, disease, alcoholism, servants, abuse, and gun violence), and summarizing the stories of twenty more Packard women. I found it interesting that Fabrice Houbart, who spent "two decades working for the UN/World Bank system," noted, in a section entitled "The myth of nuclear families and monogamy" of a recent newsletter, that through his research, he often found "hidden natural sons, paternity recognitions on one's deathbed, and wives' despair," adding "if anything, gay people are a [tidbit]…more transparent." Also, it was great to see a high school advancing with their production of "Mrs. Packard," a play which focuses on my ancestor Elizabeth Packard (who even has a Wikipedia page! and a recent book by Kate Moore entitled *The Women They Could Not Silence*), to say the least.

There was, also, an online exhibit about finding ancestors which traced "the different paths people are taking to find their ancestors, through methods both new…and old," a mysterious Ms. Packard in Massachusetts (unsure if they are related to Packards in my genealogy), the curious history of Ulysses Grant's great-grandfather Captain Noah Grant, the story of Moca, Puerto Rico in an article by genealogist Ellen Fernandez-Sacco, a genealogist describing in detail the records the found during

their trip to an archives, enslaved family history records brought to light by a project in Mississippi, and importance of making a genealogy timeline.

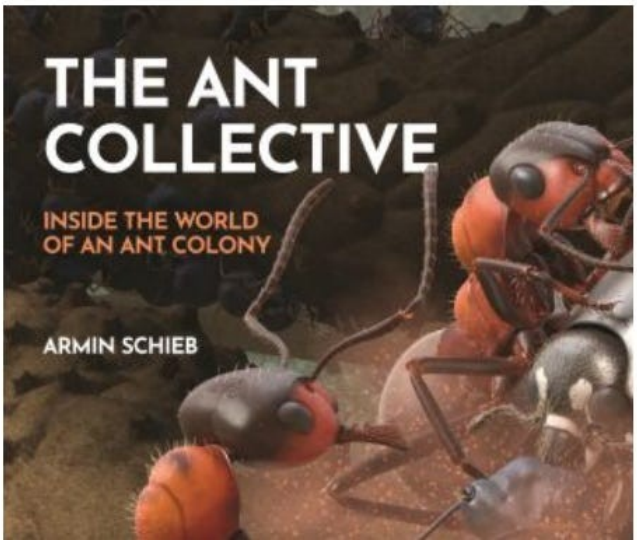
There were other articles on topics such as vintage cookbooks and recipes, determining what the oldest reliable genealogical records are, why you need to stop adding names to your family tree, why people would devote themselves to endless genealogies, how to date a 19th century terrace, transfer and legitimacy of children in genealogy, and an African ancestry narrative in the digital age.

ANIMAL BEHAVIOR

The Complex Social Lives of Ants and Why They Matter

Respect is due to the intelligent and organized society of ants.

Updated May 10, 2024 | Reviewed by Hara Estroff Marano



Ants are fascinating and remarkably intelligent insects who live in complex social groups called colonies.[1,2] When I first learned about ant expert Armin Schieb's beautifully illustrated and easy-to-read new book, *The Ant Collective: Inside the World of an Ant Colony*, I couldn't wait to

One example of the terminology criticized/examined in the below article is the above excerpt from a recent article in *Psychology Today* which uses the word “colony” seven times, and the word “collective” only four times, three of which reference the book title. The book itself boasts that “ants come alive on this fabulously illustrated journey into the heart of a bustling colony” while laughably

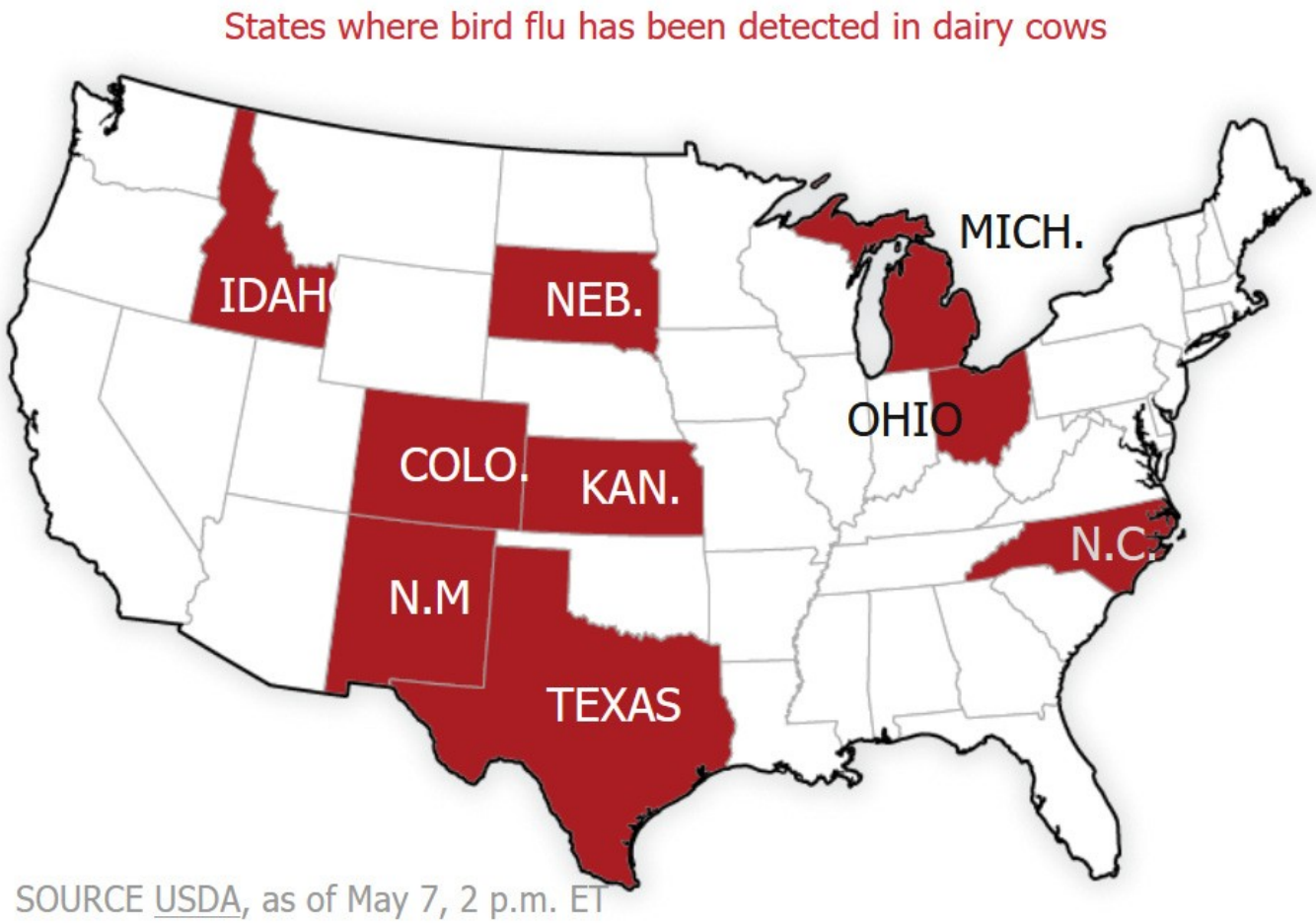
adding that “ants share a vibrant and complex communal life,” which would contradict use of the word “colony.”

This brings me to the related topic of history. On that, I’d like to highlight articles on various subjects. This includes one about colonization terminology entrenched in science, used to describe creatures, rather than “tribes or countries, communes or battalions, collectives or amalgamations,” as Whitney Barlow Robles points out, noting use of such terminology by naturalists and scientists alike, and describing the historical basis for such terminology. Robles previously wrote a book entitled *Curious Species: How Animals Made Natural History*, which she describes as “part history of science, part modern voyage tale, and part personal journey, it shows how creatures from corals to raccoons shaped the birth of natural history—with lingering consequences for our environmental crisis today.”

Other articles about history focused on what democracy meant to Abraham Lincoln, the legacy of the Hopkinsville Goblins, asking why we are segregating Black history in February, researching what we define as “free time,” Harriet Tubman and the most important understudied battle of the Civil War (Combahee River Raid), a review of various books about current and historical borders (incl. Svetlana Boym’s *The Future of Nostalgia*, William Broad’s *The Oracle*, and Wendy Brown’s *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*), an article examining what role age plays in “determining the status of equals,” and another article on forgotten lessons from “truly effective protest.” There were also collections about love/romance and Black history, and a newsletter entry in Kaye Jones’ *The Herstorian* summarizing an academic article examining the idea of ‘women and children first’ in eighteen shipwrecks, past and present, in which it was revealed that “the notion of women and children first was the exception and not the rule” with survival rate for women and children at “around 15% – or half that of men.”

In addition, there was an online exhibit on car culture and a collection criticizing essentialism which notes that demographic categories “profoundly shape Americans’ daily experiences” but do not define people. The latter noted that while “many politicians and pundits speak and act as if categories predetermine the perspectives and behaviors of their members,” stating that generalizing about such “communities” overlooks the “diversity of the human experience, and can suppress the very voices one is trying to acknowledge.” Furthermore, there were articles on the self as “more securely an object of classification” more today than ever, the U.S. Treasury’s money laundering machine, and a brief story about the license plate (and how it came to be).

With that, I come to a completely different topic: climate change and environmentalism. I am reminded of an article about plastics recycling, summarizing a report entitled "The Fraud of Plastics Recycling" which notes how the plastics industry and Big Oil "deceived the public for decades and caused the plastic waste crisis." Others focused on activists who shut down a pipeline in Mountain Valley, how Cuba's old American cars "illustrate the path forward on degrowth" (in the view of Phil Wilson on *Truthdig*), Vermont as the first state to ban oil firms for climate damage, and environmentalists criticizing Tyson for supposedly "climate friendly" beef.



This graphic was originally in a *USA Today* story I came across when writing this newsletter, which also has a graphic noting the bird flu (i.e. H5N1)'s cycle of transmission and signs and symptoms of it in humans. It is a terrible disease. All efforts *must* be taken to get this disease spread under control before it is too late.

There are many other articles I'd like to talk about here, whether on a majority-Black city (Jackson, Mississippi) which "has a water crisis that privatization won't fix," how privatizing military housing has "became a nightmare for service members," warning that TikTok's raw milk influencers

are “going to give us all bird flu” (otherwise known as H5N1), and noting that while EV batteries hurt the environment, gas cars are much worse.

Others wrote about efforts in Ukraine to document and prosecute atrocities linked to the environment, saying it “can help with accountability in other war zones,” despair among top climate scientists, police preventing “environmental activists from storming Tesla factory in Germany,” a *Nature* study saying biodiversity loss is “biggest driver of infectious disease outbreaks,” and modern human diets posing many risks to both health and the environment, specifically those “high in meat and sugar.” The latter is based on a *Global Food Security* article, examining diets in Canada, noting “an excessive supply of red meat…added sugar…dairy…roots and tubers…eggs…and chicken” requires massive greenhouse gas emissions, land use, water scarcity and water withdrawals, stating that conformity to the “recommended dietary patterns [chosen as best by the article’s authors] is necessary and can potentially reduce the current environmental impacts by more than 50%.”

Related to this is an article in *Science* stating that “achieving sustainable dietary change is essential for safeguarding human and environmental health,” noting that “mixed diets contain more combinations of dishes that meet nutritional requirements with lower carbon footprints compared to more restrictive dietary scenarios,” while admitting that a vegetarian or pescatarian diet can “look very different between countries or world regions due to differences in the local availability or preferences for ingredients…and thus may have very different impacts” and even saying that some of the vegetarian dishes mentioned in the study of 16 dietary scenarios involving many major Japanese dishes, like “bamboo shoots, butterbur, and wakame seaweed” where “cheaper and have many benefits, and have “extremely low cholesterol content in their ingredients.” The study also noted, while still advocating for mixed diets, that: “diets with generally lower carbon footprints included vegetarian” diets, while diets with “generally higher carbon footprints included almost all diets with beef dishes” which is significant, to say the least! So, that’s something positive to take away from the study.

This brings me to stories related to LGBTQ+ people. The United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution to protect rights of intersex people, for which twenty-four countries voted in favor and twenty-three abstained. None voted against the resolution, pushed by Finland, South Africa, Chile and Australia. Jesse Grainger wrote about an emerging homo-nativist electorate in UK which “would expect to find progressive views on homosexuality would be a predictor of progressive attitudes in other areas, like immigration.” Trans UMD students say they struggled to find gender-inclusive housing. Travel Noire wrote on the unique experience of traveling “while Black &

polyamorous.” *PinkNews,* in keeping with other articles which can overstate claims, made the unlikely claim of a gay character in *Inside Out 2*, which comes out on June *14, 2024*, during Pride Month. I see *why* people see this, but I doubt Disney will commit to it.

There was also a conversation between Sara Varon and ND Stevenson to discuss their “book-to-screen journeys and the surprises along the way,” with Stevenson saying he lent “a hand on the movie [adaptation of *Nimona*], and I was very grateful that the filmmakers let me feel like a part of the crew.” There were stories about how one third of LGBTQ+ adults are treated unfairly by doctors and an interview with gender studies philosopher Judith Butler about her new book *Whose Afraid of Gender?* (best known for her books *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter)*. Piero Karasu (author of *The Magical Revolution of the Reincarnated Princess and the Genius Young Lady*) had a new light novel which released on February 20, entitled *Seijo-sensei no Maho-wa Sunderu!* (*The Saint Teacher’s Witchcraft is Progressive!*). Butler is also a lesbian, non-binary, and married to political theorist Wendy Brown. I am familiar a bit with both, as I read Brown’s first book, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, which came out in 1995, during college. I haven’t read any of her other books though.

A high school girl who has never known love meets an older woman with a secret... A junior in high school, Matoi Noshita has never liked anyone and is fed up with being involved in her younger sister's and friends' boyfriend situations. One day, she meets Yuriko, who has just moved from Tokyo. At a local driving school, she asks her to drive her home on her motorcycle. Matoi is perplexed by her own curiosity about a woman whose name she does not know and where she lives. "What on earth is this feeling I am having for the first time...?"

Source: MU

Tags

Drama GL Romance Shoujo-ai College LGBT Themes

A description of *Lilies and Voices Born Upon the Wind* on Anime Planet, to give some background to the review mentioned in the below paragraph.

Also there’s posts on queer slice-of-life episodes of SFF television, need to stop pressuring people to be in relationships in Valentine’s Day, de-identifying distressed people in trans community

related to "their identity formation and discrimination in India," ambiguity in queerplatonic relationships, seven of history's greatest queer couples, a review of the story *Yuri to Koe to Kaze Matoi* (*Lilies and Voices Born Upon the Wind*) by Renmei, noting asexual themes (as its explicitly "the story of a relationship between a romantic ace and an aromantic ace"), and the comparison of pansexuality and polysexuality.

I'm moving to another subject, with a focus on anime. There were many criticisms of Crunchyroll as of late, first for failing to meet industry standards for closed captioning, the Funimation app shutting down as accounts merge with Crunchyroll, Sony erasing digital libraries that were "supposed to be accessible "forever'" as a result of the completion of the Crunchyroll-Funimation merger, and the loss of over 60,000 minutes of anime "upon transitioning to Crunchyroll." There was also answer to a question back in 2018 entitled "How Is Funimation Producing So Many Simuldubs?" which is also somewhat relevant here.

There were also articles about getting into Gundam and other long-running anime (and how its not an intimidating prospect), the ten most controversial boy's love anime (featuring *Banana Fish, Killing Stalking, Yuri on Ice!, Black Butler, Gravitation, I Think I Turned My Childhood Friend Into a Girl, My Favorite, Okane ga Nai, DRAMAtical Murder,* and *Loveless*), *Sasaki to Miyano* and the evolution of boy's love in anime, and romance anime coming out in 2024 (the only ones I've watched on here are *Astro Note, Whisper Me a Love Song, Studio Apartment, Good Lighting, Angel Included,* and *Vampire Dormitory*). A writer noted how shoujo manga helps them grapple with internalized misogyny and HIDIVE announced an anime lineup at Anime Boston 2024.

Putting aside articles about cats in anime, Justin Sevakis' company acquiring Animeigo, magical girl anime reportedly said to be "better than expected," or how *Yuri Is My Job* gave *Ouran High School Host Club* a "yuri twist," I'd like to focus on two articles in particular: the first notes the top picks for *Anime Feminist* in 2023: *Skip and Loafer, Mobile Suit Gundam: The Witch From Mercury, BanG Dream! It's MyGo!!!!!, I'm in Love with the Villainess, The Magical Revolution of the Reincarnated Princess and the Genius Young Lady, My New Boss is Goofy, Oshi no Ko, Otaku Elf, Power of Hope ~Precure Full Bloom~, Scott Pilgrim Takes Off,* and *Yuri Is My Job!*. Other picks include *The Ancient Magus' Bride* Season 2, *My Happy Marriage, ONIMAI: I'm Now Your Sister!, Pluto, Pokemon, Sacrificial Princess & the King of Beasts, Technoroid OVERMIND, Undead Murder Farce, Vinland Saga* Season 2. This somewhat aligns with my list of top 20 anime for 2023. Their list does *not* list: *Birdie Wing, The Vexations of a Shut-In Vampire Princess, Ippon Again, D4DJ, Soaring Sky: Pretty*

Cure!, Shy, The 100 Girlfriends, Yohane the Parhelion, Tearmoon Empire, The Apothecary Diaries, 16Bit Sensation: Another Layer, and *Kuma Kuma Kuma Bear*.

In one of the better articles, by Caitlin Donovan, reviewing *I'm in Love with the Villainess* in the "My Fave is Problematic" category. She praises it for growing into a story "that earnestly advocates for queer people, taking on complex subjects like homophobia, transphobia, and classism." Then she argues that the story's reliance on messy tropes "can sometimes muddle its messages," arguing that Rae's behavior toward Rae often crosses "into sexual harassment," while noting that "as Claire realizes her feelings for Rae, their relationship deepens." She says that it is still a tired storyline where an "overly pushy love interest repeatedly disregards boundaries, but wins the girl over in the end." In some ways, this is true, it is evident that Rae *wants* to be over the top and flamboyant as she believes her feelings will never be reciprocated. She abandons this behavior. Donovan praises the message about prejudices but dislikes the incest storyline, with two characters "treated as tragic and sympathetic because their love cannot be accepted by society," saying that Rae is equating queer sexuality and incest, but I think instead she is saying that people should love who they want. Donovan also says that Rae feels like an "authentic representation of a lesbian geek" (I can agree with that). She notes that the series advocates passionately for trans people, the power of unsubtle storytelling, directly engages with class discrimination, acknowledges that social change doesn't happen immediate, and has "earnestness and heart…[which] shines through." A solid review!

Opening image of trailer for Scavenger Reign, still on YouTube to this day

Coming to Western animation, the most unfortunate (and infuriating) news this week was the cancellation of *Housebroken* by Fox and *Scavengers Reign* by Max. Both series had LGBTQ+ characters. While I think the latter was stronger than the former, this, again, is a sign that executives care little about creative people and the ideas they bring to the table. Apparently, *Housebroken* was cancelled due to subpar views, while the reason for Max's decision wasn't explained. However, the series will be held almost hostage, as Netflix will *only* produce Season 2 based on "reception of the first season [releasing on May 31] with its users."

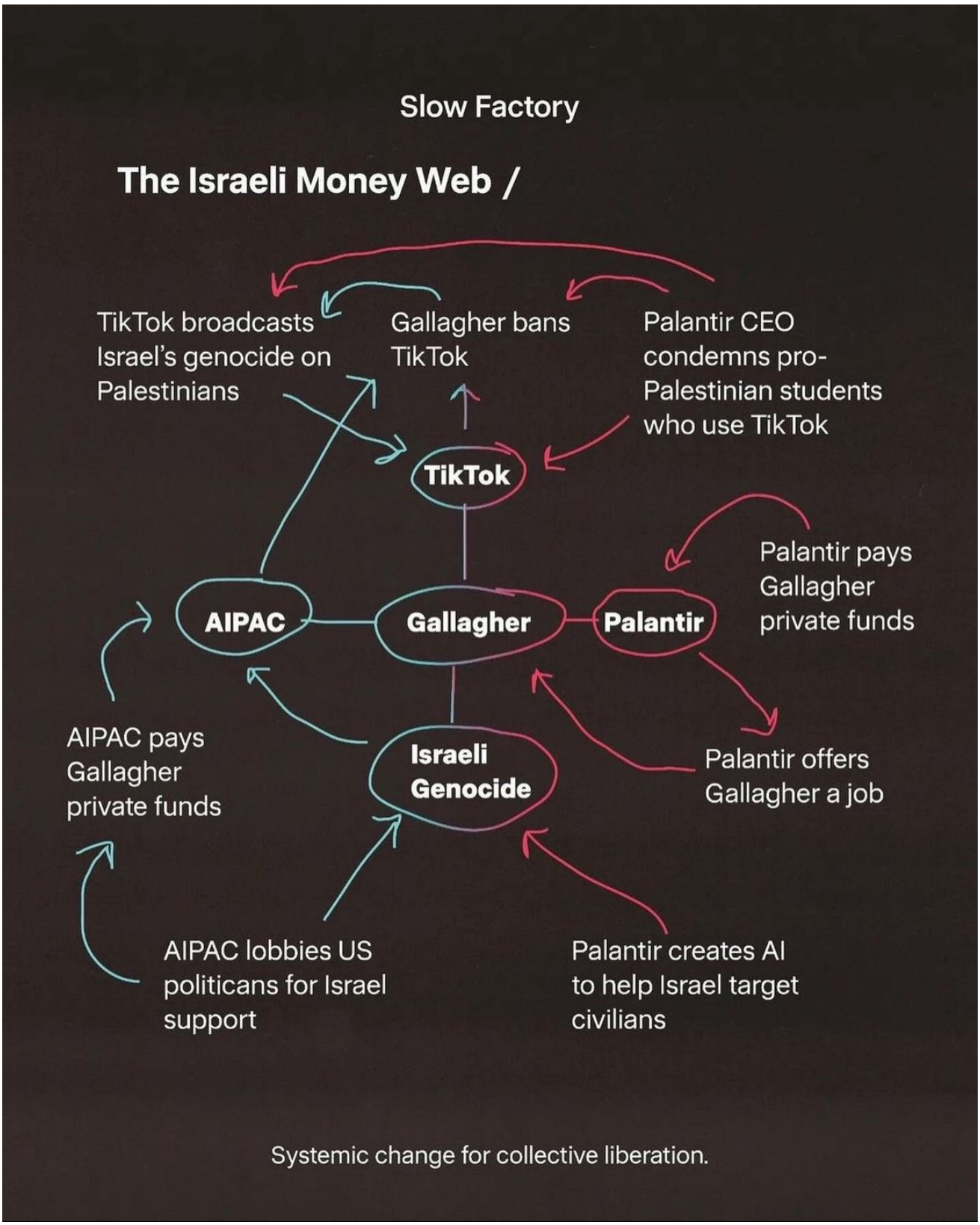
Other articles focused on right-wing reactionaries not getting on Disney's board and Rebecca Sugar praising the animation style in *Whisper of the Heart*, saying that the drawing of lines inside of the character's eyes which are weeping as red rather than black, "it's so subtle. It's the difference of painting a single line, but you feel the impact so strongly." In the same interview she said that it was "quite challenging and controversial to have those characters cry" in *Adventure Time* and *Steven Universe*, noting that she "wanted Steven to be the kind of character who could cry." She said it would make sense for Steven to cry for a "myriad of different reasons and in a lot of different visual styles, flexible to accommodate the drawing styles of different storyboard artists who were also writing these sequences." Additionally, there was a mixed review/description of rates and working conditions inside

SpindleHorse Toons, a review of *Hazbin Hotel* within *Polygon*, and a viral cast reaction to *Hazbin Hotel*.

There was also an interview with Vivienne Medrano (creator of *Hazbin Hotel* and *Helluva Boss*) who encourages fellow indie artists, a description of web animations which deserve series, a commentary on what is said to be the "recent triumph" of indie animation," spotlights on Rebecca Sugar and Vivienne Medrano, possible queer representation in Disney's future, exploring *Hazbin Hotel*, and Nickelodeon animation workers ratifying an Animation Guild contract by 89% for wage increases and staffing minimums.

This brings me to subjects I couldn't focus on earlier, as they didn't fit neatly anywhere else. The cargo ship owner behind the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge (i.e. the container ship *Dali*, which was chartered by Maersk, which smashed into the bridge) was sued multiple times for negligence related to worker injuries in the past. An artist did a tribute to painter Duniyana Al-Amoor who was killed by a Israeli rocket in Gaza at age 22 in August 2022. There's a book by Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara and Gladys Rowe entitled *Living in Indigenous Sovereignty* which "lifts up the wisdom of Indigenous scholars, activists and knowledge keepers who speak pointedly to what they are asking of non-Indigenous people," and an essay about racism as a "form of persistent malinformation."

In addition some argued that "better browsers" made the web worse (rather than social media), why we can't stop arguing if 'Rump is a fascist, testing A.I. censorship and what the bots *won't* tell you, how to recognize an A.I.-generated cookbook, the current risk of hobbies becoming side hustles, lies about pro-Palestine protests in mainstream media, how the U.S. created the border crisis, the ecological crisis caused by Mongolia's neoliberal turn, and A.I.-generated nonsense "leaking into scientific journals."


Slow Factory
The Israeli Money Web /
TikTok broadcasts Israel's genocide on Palestinians
Gallagher bans TikTok
Palantir CEO condemns pro-Palestinian students who use TikTok
TikTok
Palantir pays Gallagher private funds
AIPAC
Gallagher
Palantir
AIPAC pays Gallagher private funds
Israeli Genocide
Palantir offers Gallagher a job
AIPAC lobbies US politicans for Israel support
Palantir creates AI to help Israel target civilians
Systemic change for collective liberation.

A graphic put together by an urban development specialist, mass transit enthusiast, and cities & sustainable development specialist Momin Sheikh, who captioned this on social media with "The Tik Tok ban was brought to you by AIPAC"

Last but not least were articles calling on Congress to give up on unconstitutional Tik Tok bans (this was published before the ban was passed by both houses of Congress), an interview with Michelle Alexander on "Gaza, Solidarity, MLK & What Gives Her Hope," how Biden's use of the slur word "illegal" to describe undocumented immigrants in his State of the Union (off the cuff) underscores his "rightward lurch on immigration," how the war on women did not "stop with overturning Roe," a journalism professor blaming Wall Street for the newspaper industry's collapse, and the delicate art of making fictional languages.

I'd like to end this newsletter by focusing on illustrations in *The Nib* and elsewhere. Molly Knox Ostertag, a cartoonist and writer who worked on *The Owl House*, the webcomic *Strong Female Protagonist*, a graphic novel series, and the series *Tales of the Night Watchman*, has been prolific in publishing, as of late, on her Substack newsletter entitled "In the Telling." This includes her illustrations of Sherlock Holmes and John H. Watson about one of her favorite stories *The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton* (with her comics here and here giving it a new twist), and many others, which adapt other Sherlock Holmes stories by Arthur Conan Doyle. At the same time, her wife, ND Stevenson, has various posts on his Substack entitled *I'm Fine I'm Fine Just Understand*. This often includes short comics on daily life, worries (like top surgery), precious memories, lingering emotions, and related topics.

In terms of *The Nib*, I came across illustrations about how climate change "disproportionally affects the most vulnerable," a yoga guru who embraced Qanon theories, reorienting cults (including noting the interconnection of the owner of Cheesecake Factory David M. Overton with the Sufism Reoriented cult, among other topics), the history of Black socialism in America, the junkiness and bloated nature of e-commerce sites, the worry last year of China sending spy balloons over U.S. military sites worldwide, and train derailment (and making fun of the pathetic attempt to compensate people in light of Congress killing a railroad strike).

That's all for this newsletter. Considering the gap of time between this newsletter and the last one, I'm going to try to make the newsletters more timely.

– Burkely